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MEADE'S PURSUIT OF LEE  
THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGNS OF THE SUMMER OF 1863

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL SANDS A. ROBNICK

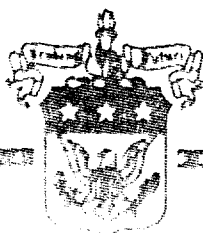
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MEADE'S PURSUIT OF LEE  
THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGNS OF THE SUMMER OF 1863

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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U. S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
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## ABSTRACT

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MEADE'S PURSUIT OF LEE  
THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGNS OF THE SUMMER OF 1863

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the operational abilities of General George Gordon Meade. He was a competent general and certainly served the Union well, yet he was unable to decisively defeat Lee during the summer of 1863. History tends to treat him considerably better than did the press and politicians of his day. The reasons for the controversy surrounding his performance are many and varied. His President on occasion would publicly make comments of dissatisfaction concerning his performance, his contemporaries would write letters to the President and the Commander of the Armies of the United States concerning his seeming lack of aggressiveness, and his performance was the subject of countless articles in the newspapers. Yet, throughout the course of the war, he was not responsible for a single military disaster, he was in command of the Army of the Potomac for the great victory at Gettysburg, and he remained in command of the Army of the Potomac for the remainder of the Civil War, a period of command considerably longer than any of his predecessors. Why then was he the subject of such controversy and why was he unable to bring Lee to battle and decisively defeat him?

In this attempt to analyze the operational and command abilities of General Meade, I will focus on the period of time from Lee's recrossing of the Potomac after Gettysburg until the end of the "campaign season" in the winter of 1863. This time frame is

important because it represents that period of time when Meade was in command of the Army of the Potomac and was solely responsible for the conduct of the campaigns against Lee in the summer of 1863. While the influences of other people and events are great, it cannot be denied, that Meade was in command. The successes and failures of the Army of the Potomac during this period were his.

## BACKGROUND

By the end of the first week of July, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln had reason to believe that a resolution to the conflict was at hand. Grant was victorious at Vicksburg, Meade and the much maligned Army of the Potomac emerged victorious at Gettysburg, and even the exasperating Rosecrans experienced some success in driving the Confederates from middle Tennessee. While some problems with the armies still promised to be very troublesome, given the previous two years of military disasters, no one could deny that, for the moment, it looked like victory could be at hand.

As Lincoln reflected on the events of the first week of July, he could take hope in the emergence of three military champions to prosecute the war to a speedy termination on terms favorable to the Union. Grant's strategy of overwhelming his adversary by continuous, unrelenting pressure brought him great victories at Fort Donelson, Shiloh, and Vicksburg. This strategy was a significant departure from the constant maneuverings for a position of superiority which seemed to be in vogue among many of the less successful Union commanders. Later, after finally taking command of all the armies of the United States, this same philosophy would be reflected in his

orders to his Army Commanders. To Sherman, he would order, "You I propose to move against Johnston's army, to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources." (1) Of Meade, he ordered, "Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also." (2) This philosophy of continuous, overwhelming pressure would eventually win the battles needed to bring Lee and the Confederacy to the surrender at Appomattox. Victories, for which there were no substitutes, are what finally made Lincoln choose Grant over Meade and Rosecrans.

Major General William S. Rosecrans proved to be more of a burden than a ray of hope for President Lincoln. Rosecrans did experience a modicum of success during the winter of 1862 and again in the late spring and early summer of 1863. However, his constant complaining about lack of recognition and lack of men proved to be exasperating to Lincoln who wished for more aggressiveness from Rosecrans to relieve pressure on the operations in the West. Instead, Rosecrans seemed to take great pleasure in deluging Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, General-in-Chief of the Union Army, Major General Henry W. Halleck, and ultimately Lincoln with lengthy letters asking for more men and materials, while holding his army in a posture of inactivity for an unpardonable period of over six months in the vicinity of Mufreesboro. Halleck said of Rosecrans "that he sent more telegrams to Washington than all other generals in the field combined." (3) During this extended period of inactivity, both Halleck and Lincoln used every means possible to spur Rosecrans into action. Finally, late in June, Rosecrans moved towards Chattanooga, his eventual defeat at Chickamuga, and his ultimate demise as a commander of

promise in the Union Army.(4)

After the victory at Gettysburg, no brighter star shone on the horizon than that of General George Meade. However, it was only a matter of a few weeks before he was the subject of controversy and debate that would follow him for the remainder of his career. While Meade continued to have loyal followers throughout the war, the escape of Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia after Gettysburg would set the stage for his critics for the remainder of the war. It cannot be denied, that these criticisms concerning his operational skills were a constant drain on his energy and almost a daily distraction in the performance of his duties. As a result, Meade would come to despise the press, react to criticism by submitting his resignation, and spend a considerable amount of time responding to any criticism, no matter how trivial. Each new military encounter for the Army of the Potomac seemed to add fuel to the fire and had an effect on his operational skills. Lincoln continued to see him as a commander of promise and respected his achievement at Gettysburg. However, Meade's inability to provide him with another victory over Lee ultimately lead to Grant's elevation to general-in-chief of the Union armies. For in war only victories count, and of the three, Rosecrans failed, Meade faded, and only Grant was able to give Lincoln the victories he required.

The reasons for Meade's demise can be attributed to a variety of personal, professional and political factors. The loss of the family fortune eventually required him to seek appointment to West Point rather than pursue a career in law. He can only be described as a reluctant soldier whose pragmatism, born of his engineer training, prevented him from rushing to disaster as many of his contemporaries

had been inclined to do. From his correspondence and the writings of those who accompanied him during the years he commanded the Army of the Potomac, it is obvious that the criticism of the politicians and the press had a profound affect on him. The continuous correspondence from Halleck concerning the desires of the President conveyed conflicting intentions and certainly had an affect on the manner in which Meade deported himself while in command. Last, but certainly not least, were the talents and abilities of his lieutenants. Meade and the Army of the Potomac were always confronted with the best the South had to field. While Meade's troops were the equal of Lee's, his corps and division commanders, as a whole, never really demonstrated the audacity, loyalty, and consistency of Lee's lieutenants. I will treat each of the factors which affected Meade during his campaigns against Lee separately and then look at the opportunities that Meade had to defeat Lee and analyze what he did right and what he did wrong.

## CHAPTER II

### MEADE THE MAN

Meade was accepted to West Point upon his second attempt at application. Had it not been for the loss of the family fortune, Meade would have most likely embarked upon a career in law rather than the military.(5) He was not an enthusiastic cadet. He graduated in 1835 and was made a second lieutenant of artillery. He was the only member of the class that rose to distinction. Other members included Jubal Early, Edward Johnston, Lewis Armistead, and John C.

Pemberton.(6)

From an early age, Meade has been described as being impetuous and having an energetic temperament. These character traits would continue to be ascribed to him by all who knew him or who wrote of him for the remainder of his career. His energetic temperament often developed into a fiery temper which was mentioned frequently by those who wrote about him. Even Theodore Lyman, who served on his staff as a volunteer aide and was considered a friend of Meade wrote that "Meade had an excellent temper which on occasions, burst forth, like a twelve-pounder spherical case."(7) This temper and impetuosity would cause Meade to request to be relieved whenever he felt his performance of duty was wrongfully impuned in a letter from Halleck. In response to a telegram from Meade informing Halleck of Lee's escape, Halleck wrote:

...I need hardly say to you that the escape of Lee's army without another battle has created great dissatisfaction in the mind of the President, and it will require an active and energetic pursuit on your part to remove the impression that it has not been sufficiently active heretofore.(8)

Meade responded one and one-half hours later with the following telegram:

Having performed my duty conscientiously and to the best of my ability, the censure of the President conveyed in your dispatch of 1 p. m. this day, is, in my judgement, so underserved that I feel compelled most respectfully to ask to be immediately relieved from the command of this army.(9)

Meade continued to mention his desire to be relieved in letters to his wife and in comments to members of his staff long after Halleck indicated that the intent of the letter "was not intended as a censure, but as a stimulus to an active pursuit. It is not deemed a sufficient cause for your application to be relived."(10) Meade's

volunteer-aide, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Lyman quoted Meade in his letter of October 26, 1863 as having said "I do wish the Administration would get mad with me, and relieve me; I am sure I keep telling them, if they don't feel satisfied with me, to relieve me; then I could go home and see my family in Philadelphia."(11)

Meade's family had to have distracted him somewhat. His brothers and sisters divided their loyalties between the north and south during the Civil War. One sister lived on a plantation in Mississippi and was a violent secessionist, while another was the wife of Confederate Navy Captain Thomas B. Huger, who was killed at New Orleans. Three sisters married Union officers, a brother was a Captain in the Union Navy, while his wife's sister was the wife of Confederate Brigadier General Henry A. Wise.(12)

### MEADE THE SOLDIER

In 1840, Meade left the army to embark upon a career as an engineer. He accepted an appointment as a civil assistant for the survey of the Northeastern border of the U. S. Later that year he married the daughter of a prominent leader of the Whig party.(13)

In 1842, Meade sought reappointment to the army and was recommissioned a second lieutenant in the Corps of Topographical Engineers. His main motivation for rejoining the army was financial not patriotic, in that the engineering profession in civilian life was uncertain at best.(14) While many soldiers have vacillated in their choice of careers, for Meade it indicated a certain reluctance for the life of a soldier. Also, I believe it is his reluctance coupled with his engineer's pragmatism that kept him from intuitively

making bold and daring operational decisions later in his career as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Another factor which bears on Meade's performance was the military training at West Point. Meade was very much the product of his military training. During his time as a student, Jomini's interpretation of Napoleon became the foundation of the teaching of strategy at West Point.(15) The writings of Frederick the Great were also studied as well as the campaigns of other great captains. The influence of the emphasis on the military writer, Antoine Henri Jomini, the Campaigns of Napoleon, and to some extent, Frederick the Great, can be seen in the conduct of the campaigns of Meade. He constantly sought the decisive advantage of position in all of his attempts at combat with Lee. Meade never attempted the frontal assault, and on many occasions, delayed combat in an effort to find out a little more about the enemy or to make one more move to enhance his position. As a result of this conduct the element of surprise was lost and Lee escaped.

Meade's earliest combat experience came in 1845 as a topographical engineer on the staff of General Zachary Taylor. As a result of his "careful reconnoissances" of the enemies position and to his "intelligent zeal and gallantry" Meade was breveted to first lieutenant.(16) His service as a staff engineer in the Mexican War was noteworthy and should have served as a lesson to him on the importance of accurate information concerning topographical conditions and the position of enemy fortifications. However, he seems to have forgotten the lessons when he overlooked the need for good route reconnaissance in his last attempt to bring Lee to battle at Mine Run in late fall of 1863.

## CHAPTER III

### PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Direct letters to the President from the field commanders were not unusual during the Civil War. Rosecrans, Hooker, Meade, and a host of others would routinely send telegrams and letters directly to Lincoln to express a personal view or plead a cause. Lincoln was not above writing directly to his field commanders in an attempt to lend the weight of the presidency to a particular order or directive. Lincoln did have a way with words and in most cases his barbs, couched as they were, would have the expected affect. With Meade, as with any general, then or now, a written slight from the President, be it real or imagined, had a very real affect. While Lincoln's comments concerning his "dissatisfaction" in his letter of July 6, 1863 to Halleck may not have been directed solely at Meade, Halleck in later correspondence gives that impression to Meade, which elicits Meade's request to be relieved.(17) On several occasions, Lincoln does make denigrating comments concerning Meade's performance. On October 23, while Meade was in Washington to discuss future operations with Halleck, he met with Lincoln. During this visit, Lincoln told Meade that after the battle of Gettysburg he felt that Meade's attitude towards Lee was "that of an old woman trying to shoo her geese across a creek."(18) Regardless of how the remark was intended or how belated, it can hardly be considered a vote of confidence from the commander-in-chief. Although, Meade did not specifically refer to Lincoln's comment, shortly after the

Washington visit he remarked to his aide, LtCol. Lyman, that he wished, "the Administration would get mad with me and relieve me;..."(19) Lincoln's attitude had to prey on Meade's mind and to establish a mutual lack of confidence and respect between Lincoln and Meade.

## HALLECK

Halleck graduated from West Point four years after Meade. He wrote several books, studied law, served fifteen uneventful years in the army and resigned in 1854 to become a successful lawyer. His academic standing at West Point and literary accomplishments earned him the nickname of "Old Brains." As a result of civilian influence, he was appointed a major general on August 9, 1861, ranked only by Generals Winfield S. Scott, George B. McClellan and John C. Fre'mont. His lack of military talent and overall incompetence earned him another nickname after he took over as overall commander, that of "Old Wooden Head."(21) His superfluous advice, embellishments of Lincoln's comments, and well-known incompetence aroused many exchanges between himself and Meade, which would serve to heighten the antagonism and lack of trust between Meade and the administration. Then, as now, this had to be a distraction to Meade in his efforts to bring Lee to battle and defeat him.

The best that can be said of Major General Halleck, General-in-Chief of the Union armies, is that he was more a part of the problem than he was a part of the solution. At Corinth, Halleck with 100,000 men allowed General P. G. T. Beauregard, with 70,000 men, of which 15,000 were sick, to escape. After this stunning

display of incompetence in the field, Lincoln appointed him to command of the Union armies. The list of testimonials to the inappropriateness of Halleck's appointment was long and distinguished. Stanton, the Secretary of War characterized him as "probably the greatest scoundrel and most bare-faced villain in America"; General McClellan felt he was "the most hopelessly stupid of all men in high position"; and Gideon Welles stated in his diary "that Halleck originates nothing, anticipates nothing... takes no responsibility, plans nothing, suggests nothing, is good for nothing." Lincoln himself came to regard him as "little more than a first rate clerk." (20)

#### THE POLITICIANS AND THE PRESS

The glow of Meade's victory at Gettysburg wore off quickly after Lee made his escape across the Potomac in mid July. Meade's judgement and tenacity were questioned after Lee's escape. Not only were Lincoln and Halleck quick to comment, the politicians and press were relentless in their cries for a punishing defeat of Lee as they perceived his army to be in a weakened state. Lincoln himself in his "unsent letter" of criticism expressed his disappointment as he wrote ...my dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape... the war will be prolonged indefinitely.... I am distressed immeasurably because of it." (22) Criticism from all quarters preyed heavily on Meade and the politicians and the press were not about to soften their comments. From this point forward, Meade viewed the politicians with distrust and the press with absolute loathing.

Meade was particularly offended by a letter written to the SPIRIT OF THE TIMES newspaper by a "distinguished military writer," by the name of George Wilkes. Wilkes impunes Meade's performance at Gettysburg in a letter written to the paper on August 16, 1863. He states:

"The battle of Gettysburg was purely defensive, and our success was mainly due to the natural strength of our position, to our artillery, and the firmness of a portion of the troops, but in no degree to the strategy or ability displayed by any of the generals, from the senior down."(23)

The depth of Meade's feelings for what he felt was unwarranted criticism can be seen in his letters to his wife. On September 5, Meade wrote to his wife that he had been charged "with imbecility and timidity." He felt the article was "very bitter" and took some solace in the fact that "respectable people" would consider the source. He further stated that the reason for the personal attack was that "Wilkes is a Hooker man."(24) On this point, Meade was probably correct in that George Wilkes used his personal influence with General Hooker to obtain the exclusive privilege of supplying the Army of the Potomac with newspapers.(25) On December 7, Meade wrote Mrs. Meade another letter in which he dwelled upon another article in the New York Herald that claimed "no generalship was displayed" at Gettysburg. Meade continued to be preoccupied with his treatment in the press for the remainder of the war.(26)

The depth of Meade's dissatisfaction with the press finally manifested itself on June 7, 1864. General Meade ordered that Mr. Edward Crapsey, a correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer, "be arrested, marched through camp wearing a placard marked Libeller of the Press, and then put outside the army lines and forbidden to

return." It seems Mr. Crapsey made some remarks about General Meade in his published accounts of the battle of the Wilderness, to which General Meade and his staff took great offense. Meade's order was carried out with exceptional enthusiasm by Provost Marshall- General Marsena R. Patrick. He had Crapsey mounted and tied on the sorriest looking mule to be found, with his face to the mule's tail, and with a drum corps beating the "Rogue's March," was paraded for hours through the ranks of the army.(26) This particular incident reflects the depth of feelings that had been festering in Meade as a result of the articles written concerning his performance at Gettysburg. Shortly after this incident, Meade's temper flared once again, to be directed at yet another correspondent when he banned Mr. William H. Kent of the New York Tribune from the Army of the Potomac.(27) Meade also annulled the press pass of Mr. William Swinton of the New York Times and ordered that he not be allowed to return to the army.(28)

The depth of the distraction of the press on Meade cannot be accurately measured in terms of tactical or strategic mistakes. However, it is safe to say that the press reports weighed heavily on his mind and caused him considerable distress. His letter of August 31, to his wife included "some scraps from the newspapers" which he considered flattering because they were accurate and referred to his gentlemanly qualities. He goes on to state "for if there is any reputation I aspire to, it is that of a gentleman."(29) The accounts that implied that he lacked courage or that he was militarily inept infuriated him and had to influence his decisions.

Meade's performance was the subject of many conversations among the political elite. To what extent these comments became known to Meade cannot be stated with complete certainty. It can be safely

assumed that Meade was aware of the criticisms and they affected him no less than the newspaper accounts. The list of political critics included many powerful people.

Simon Cameron was one of the most influential and corrupt politicians of his day. He was elected to the senate in 1845. After his first term, he failed twice to be reelected. In 1856, he returned to the senate with the backing of Pennsylvania Republicans. In 1860, he traded Pennsylvania votes for an appointment to the cabinet post of Secretary of War. The complaints of corruption are so numerous that Lincoln was forced to appoint him Minister to Russia in 1862 to get rid of him. Cameron returned to the United States in 1863, and won election to the Senate in 1867.(34) He remained in a position of great political influence throughout the Lincoln and Grant presidencies and certainly contributed to the corruption endemic to those administrations. The depth of his influence can be seen in another unrelated exchange of telegrams with the President. On October 15, 1863 Cameron sent a telegram to Lincoln informing him that the Republican majority in the Senate depended upon the release of Major White, a Republican Senator captured and in Libby Prison. Lincoln wired back on Oct 17, that the matter was "immediately attended to in the way we could think of."(35) The effect, if any, of Cameron's exchanges with Lincoln concerning Meade's performance are not documented. However, Cameron and Meade were both Pennsylvanians and undoubtedly Meade took offense and was influenced by any criticism from such an influential politician.

Simon Cameron, the former Secretary of War before Stanton who was at that time senator from Pennsylvania, took time out from his pursuit of power and fortune to offer advice to Lincoln on what

actions Meade should undertake to defeat Lee. Cameron telegraphed Lincoln on July 14, to inform him that as the result of a recent visit to the Army of the Potomac, he was convinced that Meade was about to allow Lee's army to escape. He referred to the "council of war" that Meade held on the night of July 12, at which he polled his corps commanders in regards to the attack on Lee at Williamsport.

(30) Lincoln's response was quick and he informed Cameron that by the time his wire was received, Lee had already crossed the Potomac. He ended his response by requesting that Cameron inform him of the name of the only corps commander that voted to attack Lee.(31)

Lincoln had already received Meade's July 13, message to Halleck reporting that he had postponed his intended attack because "five of his six corps commanders were unqualifiedly opposed to it."(32) It is obvious Lincoln was disturbed by the corroborating message from Cameron and for whatever purpose wanted to know the name of the single stalwart corps commander, which was reported to be General Howard.(33)

Another prominent politician, Assistant Secretary of War, Charles A. Dana also took the opportunity to express a lack of confidence in Meade through correspondence with General Grant. In a December 21, 1863 telegram to Grant, Dana invoked the names of Stanton and Halleck to lend credence to his views concerning Grant's campaign plans. He suggested that the surest way of "getting the rebels altogether out of Tennessee" was to use the Army of the Potomac. He then states "but from that Army nothing is to be hoped under its present commander." He then went on to recommend that either Sherman or W. F. Smith be placed in command of the Army.(36)

It is clear that Meade was continually the subject of unrelenting

criticism from the press and politicians. The majority of the politicians were rabid abolitionists intent on punishing the South. They were constantly clamoring for victories and the seizure of all captured southern property. Whenever a general did not seem to be prosecuting the war with sufficient enthusiasm, they immediately called for his relief. The largest factor in Meade's favor, was that there was no other general as competent as he to replace him. However, the continuous criticism took its toll and had to have an effect on Meade's thought process and morale.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEADE'S LIEUTENANTS

No army commander has succeeded without competent lieutenants which he trusted and relied upon. Meade felt that, his commanders were not to be trusted to carry out his orders as he envisioned.

"Another great trouble with me is the want of active and energetic subordinate officers, men upon whom I can depend and rely upon taking care of themselves and commands. The loss of Reynolds and Hancock is most serious; their places are not to be supplied. However, with God's help, I will continue to do the best I can."(37)

This line written by Meade to his wife is perhaps the most telling of all statements he made concerning the condition of his corps commanders. The defense of Gettysburg threw his command structure into a state of disarray. The loss of his two best commanders coupled with the fact that he was elevated to command of the army from the position of Fifth Corps commander left him with fully half of his corps and new commanders as he began his pursuit against Lee. Given the unreliability of his commanders, the turmoil of the sudden

change of commanders of the Army of the Potomac (Meade was the fourth commander in 8 months), the chaos of the Gettysburg battlefield, and previously discussed pressures that were external to the battlefield, it is a small wonder that Meade plodded cautiously along after Lee rather than aggressively bringing him to battle. A greater feeling of confidence in his commanders may have been the stimulus needed to spur the pragmatic and reluctant Meade to exploit the situation. However, on the evening of July 12, with Lee's army trapped in defensive positions against an unfordable Potomac River, Meade, having been in command of the Army of the Potomac for only 14 days, sought the advice of his lieutenants. The most influential let him down and voted against aggressive action and the reluctant Meade acquiesced to their wishes and elected to further study the enemy position prior to making an attack.(38) The one day delay is all Lee needed to move his army across the Potomac to the safety of the Shenandoah Valley.

Those generals present at the council of war on the evening of July 12, included his seven corps commanders, his cavalry commander, his chief of staff, and his staff engineer. Meade reported that five of his six corps commanders were against attacking.(39) This was a misrepresentation of the consensus of the council of war as a whole.

#### WADSWORTH

James Samuel Wadsworth spent two years at Harvard, studied law and was admitted to the bar. When the war broke out, having no pretensions he served as a volunteer aide to McDowell at First Manassas. He became military governor of the District of Columbia in

1862 and after failing to be elected governor of New York, in December of 1862, he was assigned command of the First Division of Reynold's First Corps. His division fought well at Gettysburg but the division never recovered from the many casualties and its regiments were redistributed by Grant. Wadsworth fought well in command of a division in Warren's Fifth Corps in the Wilderness where on May 6, 1864, he was shot from his horse receiving a bullet in his brain and died.(40)

At the council of war, Wadsworth represented the First Corps commander, Major General John Newton, who could not attend because he was sick. Meade probably did not count his vote because he was not a corps commander. Wadsworth voted to attack Lee immediately.

#### HAYS

Brigadier General Alexander Hays, USMA, class of 1844, graduated with Winfield Hancock. He was breveted for gallantry in the Mexican War and resigned in 1848 to search for gold in California. At the outbreak of the war he joined the Pennsylvania Volunteers and was breveted to colonel for gallantry. Wounded at Second Manassas, he was promoted to brigadier general on September 29, 1862. After recovering from his wounds, he was assigned to command the 3rd Division of the Second Corps, which he led at Gettysburg with conspicuous gallantry. Later, because of seniority, he commanded a brigade of Birney's division and on the morning of May 5, 1864, was killed in the Wilderness.(41)

Hays was in temporary command of the Second Corps when he attended the council of war and he was not in favor of attacking Lee.

## FRENCH

Major General William Henry French, USMA, class of 1837, graduated with Sedgwick and Hooker, and Confederates Bragg, Early and Pemberton. He was breveted to major for gallantry and meritorious service in the Mexican War. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Brigadier General French was assigned to command a brigade of the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac. After taking part in the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, French, now a major general, was placed in charge of the District of Harper's Ferry. After the wounding of General Sickles at Gettysburg, French was given the Third Corps and initially enjoyed the full confidence of Meade. Because of slowness, especially at Mine Run, he lost his military reputation and was blamed for the Union failure to defeat Lee at Mine Run. He later blamed his tardiness at Mine Run on his division commanders, Generals Birney, Prince and Carr, when only Prince rightfully deserved a share of the blame. Upon consolidation of the corps under Grant, French disappeared and served out the war on various boards.(42)

French was in command of the Third Corps and was not in favor of attacking Lee.

## SYKES

Major General George Sykes, USMA, class of 1842, graduated with no less than twelve classmates who would rise to corps or army commanders to the Union or Confederate causes. He was breveted to

captain for gallantry in the Mexican War and on the Indian frontier. As a major, he commanded a battalion at First Manassas. Sykes became a brigadier general of volunteers on September 28, 1861 and commanded a division at Second Manassas. He was held in reserve at Fredericksburg and was not involved in the rout of the Federal right at Chancellorsville. He succeeded Meade in command of the Fifth Corps after Meade was named to command the Army of the Potomac and at Gettysburg played a crucial part in supporting Sickles' Third Corps position and the left of the Union line. At the Rappahannock Bridge and again at Mine Run, Meade considered him too slow when aggressive action was required. Sykes was relieved in December, 1863 and was sent to the Department of Kansas where he remained until the close of the war.(43)

Sykes was in command of the Fifth Corps for the pursuit of Lee and on July 12, voted against attacking Lee.

#### SEDGWICK

Major General John Sedgwick, USMA, class of 1837, was graduated with Braxton Bragg, Jubal Early, John Pemberton, and Joseph Hooker. He served with Taylor and Scott in the Mexican War and won brevets to captain and major. In 1861, he served under LtCol R. E. Lee in the newly authorized 1st Cavalry. He was commissioned a brigadier general of volunteers on August 31, 1861 and in McClellan's campaign on the Virginia Peninsula was wounded at the battle of Frayser's Farm while commanding a division of Sumner's Second Corps in June of 62. He was promoted to major general in July, and at Sharpsburg was wounded three times and carried from the field. Ninety days later he returned to duty and was placed in command of the Sixth Corps. At

Chancellorsville he was given the task to cross the Rappahannock and storm Early's position on Marye's Heights. This scheme fell apart when Hooker's right, commanded by Howard, collapsed yet Sedgwick managed to retire his corps in good order. At Gettysburg, the Sixth Corps was in reserve and sustained few casualties. He performed well at the battle of Rappahannock Bridge and in the preparations for the proposed attack at Mine Run. Sedgwick continued to command his corps with skill into the Wilderness campaign, where at Spotsylvania, on May 9, 1864 he was struck in the face by a bullet and died. He was one of the best generals and most beloved soldiers in the Army of the Potomac.(44)

General Sedgwick was in command of the Sixth Corps and on July 12, recommended against an attack of Lee.

#### HOWARD

Major General Oliver Otis Howard, USMA, class of 1854, graduated with Confederate generals Custis Lee, John Pegram, J. E. B. Stuart, and William Pender. At the outbreak of the war, Howard was teaching mathematics at West Point. He was elected a colonel of the 3d Maine in May, 1861. At First Manassas, Howard's brigade was driven from the field in disorder. However, he was rewarded with a commission as brigadier general of volunteers. Howard then commanded a brigade in II Corps and lost an arm at the battle of Seven Pines. In 80 days he was back in command for the retreat from Second Manassas. At Sharpsburg, he succeeded to command of the 2nd Division, II Corps after the wounding of Sedgwick. On March 31, 1863, Howard, now a major general, was assigned to command XI Corps after the relief of

Franz Sigel. At Chancellorsville, Howard ignored Hooker's order to protect his right flank and was overrun by Stonewall Jackson's furious assault. At Gettysburg, he was in command on the first day after the death of Reynolds until the arrival of Hancock. He displayed a conspicuous lack of decision, but was voted the thanks of Congress for selecting Cemetery Hill and Ridge as a position for the I and XI Corps to fall back on and defend. Although they were driven there and had no other options, Howard claimed credit with rallying the I Corps in the cemetery proper. In the fall, XI and XII Corps, commanded by Hooker, were ordered to Chattanooga and the following year, Howard commanded the IV Corps in the Atlanta Campaign. Howard, a devoted abolitionist, went on to head the Freedmen's Bureau and later founded Howard University in Washington D. C.. No other officer entrusted with the field direction of troops has ever equaled Howard's record for surviving so many tactical errors of judgment and disregard of orders, emerging later not only with increased rank, but on one occasion with the thanks of Congress.(45)

Howard was commanding the XI Corps and at the council of war voted for an immediate attack of Lee's forces. It is surmised that Meade discounted his vote because of his poor record as a tactician and corps commander.

#### SLOCUM

Major General Henry Warner Slocum, USMA, class of 1852, resigned his commission to practice law in 1856. On May 21, 1861, he became a colonel in a two-year New York regiment. He was wounded at First Manassas, and upon his return to duty took over William B. Franklin's

division when Franklin was made commander of II Corps. In July, 1862, he was promoted to major general, the second youngest of this rank. He fought at Second Manassas and after the battle of Sharpsburg was appointed to lead the XII Corps. His corps was heavily engaged at Chancellorsville and suffered heavy casualties. Slocum and Couch were the most vocal critics of Hooker after this battle. At Gettysburg, Slocum's corps held the Union right from Culp's Hill to the Baltimore Pike. Later, when XI and XII Corps were combined under Hooker, Slocum submitted his resignation rather than work for Hooker. Lincoln refused to accept it and assigned Slocum to protect the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. Later, he was assigned to the Vicksburg Military District. Hooker again asked to be relieved because of a perceived slight when Howard received command of the Army of Tennessee. Slocum is called to command the XX Corps vacated by Hooker. Slocum's XX Corps became the left wing of Sherman's forces in his "March to the Sea."(46)

Slocum commanded the XII Corps during the pursuit of Lee and at the council of war voted not to attack Lee.

#### PLEASANTON

Major General Alfred Pleasanton, USMA, class of 1844, after graduation served in the Mexican War where he was breveted for gallantry. He also served on the Indian frontier and in Florida against the Seminoles as an officer of dragoons. He directed a division of cavalry in the Maryland campaign, at Fredericksburg, and at Chancellorsville. He assumed the entire credit for saving the Union army by magnifying the repulse of a Confederate patrol into the

defeat of Stonewall Jackson's entire corps. He was promoted to major general on June 23, 1863 and directed 10,000 Union horsemen at Brandy Station, the largest cavalry action of the Civil War. He did not distinguish himself at Gettysburg. Grant relieved Pleasonton to replace him with Philip Sheridan and Pleasonton was exiled to Missouri to serve under the similiarly exiled Rosecrans.(47)

Pleasanton attended the council of war as Meade's cavalry commander and voted to attack Lee. What weight Meade placed on Pleasanton's vote is not certain, but he did not consider Pleasanton's counsel equal to that of his numbered corps commanders.

#### HUMPHREYS

Major General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, USMA, class of 1831, spent most of the time between graduation and the outbreak of hostilities working as an engineer in the Corps of Topographical Engineers. Humphreys became an aide to General McClellan in 1861 and was promoted to brigadier general in April, 1862. In September, he assumed command of a division in V Corps, which he led with distinction in the Maryland campaign, in the bloody assault on Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg and at Chancellorsville. He then transferred to a division of Sickles' III Corps; and for his services at Gettysburg, where he fought in resisting the shattering assaults of Hood and McLaws, was made a major general of volunteers and breveted to brigadier general in the regulars. He consented to be Meade's chief of staff and performed in that capacity to the satisfaction of all concerned until Grant appointed him II Corps commander after Hancock was forced to quit because of his old wounds.(48)

General Humphreys, in his testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, stated that he agreed with Meade and "that I was in favor of the operation he proposed, the advance of the army and a reconnaissance in force, as it is called, to be converted into an attack." However, Humphreys did not take part in the "vote" at the council of war because he felt it was not consistent with his position as chief of staff.(49)

#### WARREN

Major General Gouverneur Kemble Warren, USMA, class of 1850, graduated at the age of 20. Until the outbreak of the war, he served as an engineer and mathematics instructor at West Point. On May 14, 1861, he was appointed a lieutenant colonel of the 5th New York and fought at Bethel Church, and was wounded at Gaines Mill while directing a brigade of Sykes' division. He continued as a brigade commander and fought at Second Manassas and at Sharpsburg. He was promoted to brigadier general on September 26, 1862 and to major general on August 8. As chief engineer at Gettysburg he observed the lay of the land from the signal station on Little Round Top and he noted the threat to the Union position on Cemetery Ridge. Hood's onrushing Confederates were already moving to take the ground when Warren directed Vincent and Weed's brigades of Sykes' V Corps into defensive positions to save the day. Meade had faith in Warren and appointed him the temporary commander of II Corps from August, 1863 until March, 1864 when he was assigned to permanent command of V Corps. A personality clash between himself, Grant, and Sheridan resulted in Sheridan relieving him with the blessing of Grant thereby

destroying his career. A court of inquiry exonerated him in 1879.(50)

Warren was the staff engineer at the council of war. He made an impassioned statement supporting Meade's position to move ahead and attack Lee.(51)

Such was the mettle of Meade's lieutenants. None of them were cowards. Some lacked good judgement. All were products of the same system. All exhibited a certain degree of an engineer's pragmatism as opposed to the aggressive dash of the Napoleon they had studied at West Point. It is clear that Meade came to feel that some of his generals have let him down. French fell from favor after Manassas Gap and was blamed for the failure at Mine Run. Meade came to feel he was poorly served by Pleassonton's cavalry and will constantly complained that he needed to know more about the enemy. Warren fell to disfavor after his failure to make good on his assessment that "there is not the slightest doubt that I can carry the enemy's works" at Mine Run. Yet many of his generals were solid tacticians and merely need the clear and concise guidance from the army commander necessary to achieve victory in any campaign.

In many ways, Meade's generals reflect his reluctance. This may stem from the euphoria of the great victory at Gettysburg. Frederick the Great once observed:

an army is never less disposed to fight than immediately after a victory, when everyone shouts for joy, each exaggerates his great feats of arms, the multitude is delighted to have passed successfully out of great dangers, and nobody has any desire to face these dangers on the field. No general will lead his victorious troops into fire again on the next day.(52)

That Meade was a reluctant hero can be seen in his letters to his

wife immediately after Gettysburg. He wrote: "I never claimed a victory, though I stated that Lee was defeated in his efforts to destroy my army.(53) Two days later on July 10, he wrote: "The army is in fine spirits, and if I can only manage to keep them together, and not be required to attack a position too strong, I think there is a chance for me."(54) This reluctance to bring battle against an army that was just defeated seemed to be shared by his lieutenants.

One last consideration, which may be the most telling, can be found in a quote from General Wadsworth. Reportedly, Wadsworth resigned in disgust because Meade did not attack Lee before he crossed the Potomac. Wadsworth, who voted to attack Lee, was reassigned to the Mississippi Valley by Stanton. During July, 1863, on his way to his new assignment, he paused long enough in Washington to remark to General David Hunter:

General, there are a good many officers of the regular army who have not yet entirely lost the West Point ideas of Southern superiority. That sometimes accounts for an otherwise unaccountable slowness of attack."(55)

This same sentiment arose during the hearings before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War when Mr. Zachariah Chandler, Republican Senator from Michigan, asked General Warren the following question concerning the Confederate officers. "Are they better disciplined, and can they handle their troops better than we can ours? Are they so superior to us that they can handle a defeated army better than we can handle a victorious army? Warren responded; "No, sir, I do not believe they can."(56)

## CHAPTER V

## OPPORTUNITIES LOST

Major General Warren was called to testify before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War in its investigation of the Army of the Potomac. On March 10, 1864, he was asked the question: "Is it not your opinion that we have lost a great many opportunities by hesitating and waiting at the decisive points?" He responded:

Yes, sir. ...I think we should have advanced the enemy on the evening of the 3d of July, after the enemy were repulsed at Gettysburg, ...I think we should have attacked the enemy at Williamsport on the morning of the 12th of July....we lost another opportunity at Manassas Gap, on the 23d of July,...we lost another opportunity when the enemy attacked me on the 14th of October at Bristow....we lost a good opportunity after we recrossed the Rappahannock on the 8th of November. And another opportunity was lost in not making the junction we should have had at Robertson's tavern on the 27th of November. Nearly all these delays and failures, I think, are due not so much to General Meade as to his plans and expectations not being carried out."(57)

The decision to attack or not attack at Williamsport is the first independent action Meade had to decide. He was in receipt of correspondence which directed him to attack Lee, yet he allowed Lee to escape. As a result he pursued Lee for the rest of the campaign season and never really brought him to battle. Why?

## WILLIAMSPORT AND MANASSAS GAP

From the moment Lee retired from the field at Gettysburg, Meade and Halleck exchanged correspondence. On July 5, Meade gave the impression he was pressing the attack and informed Halleck that:

All my available cavalry are in pursuit on the

enemy's left and rear. My movement will be made at once on his flank, via Middletown and South Mountain Pass....Every available re-enforcement is required, and should be sent to Frederick without delay.(57)

Halleck concured. A day later, Meade reenforced that impression when he reported:

I sent General Sedgwick with the Sixth Corp in pursuit of the enemy toward Fairfield, and a brigade of cavalry toward Cashtown....I have reason to believe the enemy is retreating, very much crippled, and hampered with his train.... The losses of the enemy were no doubt very great, and he must be proportionately crippled.(58)

During these first days of pursuit, the tone of Meade's reports sound very much like a general attempting to exploit his success.

For no apparent reason, this changed quickly. The messages of July 7 portend the controversy to come. Meade's message gave Halleck his first indication that Lee might escape a confrontation. Meade writes:

Should the enemy succeed in crossing the river before I can reach him, I should like to have your views of subsequent operations - whether to follow up the army in the Valley, or cross below and nearer Washington.(59)

Halleck responded five hours later:

You have given the enemy a stunning blow at Gettysburg. Follow it up, and give him another before he can reach the Potomac. When he crosses, circumstances will determine whether it will be best to pursue him by the Shenandoah Valley or this side of Blue Ridge. There is strong evidence that he is short of artillery ammunition, and, if vigorously pressed, he must suffer.(60)

Now the pragmatic, reluctant Meade was forced to make a decision. Until now, it is obvious he considered the orders he had received on June 27, to take command of the Army of the Potomac with the

accompanying caveats to be his literal guiding light. His order read as follows:

You will receive with this the order of the President placing you in command of the Army of the Potomac....Your army is free to act as you may deem proper under the circumstances as they arise. You will, however, keep in view the important fact that the Army of the Potomac is the covering army of Washington as well as the army of operation against the invading forces of the rebels. You will, therefore, maneuver and fight in such a manner as to cover the capital and also Baltimore as far as circumstances will admit.(61)

Meade was in receipt of reports and messages of rebel forces crossing at Williamsport. He has been told that his pursuit plans as explained to Halleck, were "perfectly satisfactory" and that his "call for reinforcements had been anticipated" and they were on the way.(62) He received a message from the President which can only be interpreted as "concise guidance" to attack and destroy Lee. The message which Halleck forwarded to Meade on July 7, stated that "Vicksburg has fallen to Grant" and concluded, "if General Meade can complete his work, so gloriously prosecuted thus far, by the literal or substantial destruction of Lee's army, the rebellion will be over." (63) This message and others that followed in the coming weeks, left no doubt in Meade's mind that his orders were to attack and destroy Lee's army. Yet, Meade advanced hesitatingly and when he finally confronted Lee's retreating army on July 12, he avoided the decision to attack and allowed the trapped army to escape.

Meade's letters to his wife during this time indicated he still believed that Lee's army was a formidable force.(64) His message to Halleck on July 13, demonstrated an unfounded respect for the enemy.(65) Never in any of his analyses of the enemy does Meade

discuss the enemy's capabilities in terms of them being a defeated force, encumbered by large numbers of wounded men, lacking in food, and short of ammunition. He stated it was his intention to "hazard an attack," yet, none of his orders from July 7, through July 14, communicated a "commander's intent" to engage and destroy the enemy. Short of discovering a latent "Union Stonewall Jackson" among his corps commanders, it was a forgone conclusion that Lee would escape with his army largely intact to fight again another day.

One event that requires further mention is the July 12 council of war. On March 5, 1864, Meade testified to the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. In his testimony he explained his decision not to attack Lee:

About the 12th of July, I got into position in front of the enemy, whom I found on a line extending from Hagerstown towards a place called Downiesville, I think....Having, however, been command of the army not more than twelve or fourteen days, and in view of the important and tremendous issues involved in the result, knowing that if I were defeated the whole question would be reversed,...I therefore called a council of my corps commanders, who were the officers to execute this duty,...In view of this opinion [5 of 7 commanders opposed attack without further examination] of my subordinate officers, I yielded, or abstained from ordering an assault, but, gave the necessary directions for such an examination of the enemy's position as would enable us to form some judgment as to where he might be attacked with some degree and probability of success.(66)

If he had listened to the advice of all of the officers to offer counsel, his decision may have been different. While five of his corps commanders voted not to attack; (Warren, his staff engineer, Wadsworth, representing I Corps, Howard, commanding XI Corps, Pleasonton, cavalry corps commander, and Humphreys, his chief of staff), all counseled to advance the army and attack Lee without

hesitation. Meade's plan was to advance the army immediately in a reconnaissance in force to be converted to an attack as the situation developed.(67) He allowed himself to be convinced on the advice of his officers that further examination of the enemy's position was needed prior to an attack. The day after he stated to Halleck that he intended to attack, he wrote and informed Halleck that he delayed the attack because five of his six corps commanders were unqualifiedly opposed to it.

In testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, General Meade justified his decision not to attack on the grounds the enemy was superior in force and position. Meade testified that he had reason to believe that Lee had been resupplied with ammunition brought from Winchester and ferried over at Williamsport. He also stated that Lee's army was demoralized, but had sufficient time to recover as witnessed by the few amount of stragglers that were picked up, and that Lee still outnumbered him by 10,000 to 15,000 infantry. He estimated that he had approximately 325 artillery pieces to 125 for Lee, yet he was still wary of enemy force. To this he added that only two of his corps commanders, General Wadsworth and General Howard were in favor of attacking while "all the rest were opposed to it." He does not mention to Congress that in actuality the vote at the council of war was equally split between all of officers.(68)

Meade's chief of staff, General A. A. Humphreys testified two weeks later that he advised General Meade to attack and supported Meade's plan for an immediate reconnaissance in force to be converted to an attack. When asked if he had any subsequent information which would have led him to believe that it would not have been advisable

to make that attack, Humphreys' answered that even though an examination showed the enemy had a very strong position, he believed that "it was proper that we should have made an attack at that time, that is , a reconnaissance in force, converting it into a battle upon circumstances warranting it."(69)

Just prior to and immediately after Lee had crossed the river, a series of heated messages were exchanged which demonstrated Meade's hesitancy to make the bold decision and send his army to battle with Lee. On July 13th, Meade sent the following telegram to Halleck.

In my dispatch of yesterday I stated that it was my intention to attack the enemy today, unless something intervened to prevent it. Upon calling my corps commanders together and submitting the question to them, five out of six were unqualifiedly opposed to it. Under these circumstances, in view of the momentous consequences attendant upon a failure to succeed, I did not feel myself authorized to attack until after I had made more careful examination of the enemy's position, strength, and defensive works. ...I shall continue these reconnaissances with the expectation of finding some weak point, upon which, if I succeed, I shall hazard an attack.(70)

Halleck quickly responded:

You are strong enough to attack and defeat the enemy before he can effect a crossing. Act upon your own judgement and make your generals execute your orders. Call no council of war. It is proverbial that councils of war never fight. Re-enforcements are pushed on as rapidly as possible. Do not let the enemy escape.

The next morning Meade informed Halleck that Lee had escaped and that he had ordered his army to pursue. He then wrote: "Your instructions as to further movements, in case the enemy are entirely across the river, are desired."(71) Halleck emphatically replied:

The enemy should be pursued and cut up, wherever he may have gone....I cannot advise details, as I do not know where Lee's army is...I need hardly

say to you that the escape of Lee's army without another battle has created great dissatisfaction in the mind of the President, and it will require an active and energetic pursuit on your part to remove the impression that it has not been sufficiently active heretofore.

Meade responded by requesting to be relieved one and one-half hours later.(72) Meade was not relieved. When Lincoln, who was extremely disappointed at Lee's escape, was asked by Gideon Welles why he did not remove Meade, Lincoln returned him the obvious answer: "What can I do with such generals as we have? Who among them is any better than Meade?"(73) For whatever reason, Meade violated one of Frederick the Great's rules for war between equals, which is "Profit from the battles you win, follow the enemy to the utmost, and push your advantages as far as you can extend them, because such happy events are not common."(74) Meade had not made the bold move. He delayed. Lee escaped. The chase was on and the controversy had begun.

Meade, now armed with strong instructions to pursue and attack the enemy, still hesitated as he agonized over which route to take as he pursued Lee. It was not until July 18, that he decided to cross at Berlin and pursue Lee on his flank. The decision to cross at Berlin was based on the condition of the railroads, the ever present need to protect Washington, and was modeled on the advance of McClellan in November of 1862.(75) It is interesting to note here that even with a defeated army retreating to his front, and supplies arriving daily, Meade relied on an old strategy, delayed several days to decide on a crossing point, and then crossed the Potomac at a considerable distance from where the enemy crossed. This certainly was not a bold pursuit.

Once across the Potomac, Meade put his army in motion and directed five corps towards Manassas Gap with French's 3rd Corps in advance with orders to advance through the gap and push on to Front Royal.(76) Meade could still bring Lee to battle by attacking his flank. On the evening of July 22, French forced Manassas Gap and deployed his corps within sight of Front Royal. The conditions for the battle favored Meade. French's corps was poised for battle along the flank of Lee's retreat. The Army of the Potomac had been refitted while crossing the Potomac and it looked as if Meade's forces had arrived in position ahead of Lee's forces. With his remaining corps moving towards the area to provide support, Meade was in an advantageous position to bring Lee to battle.

The responsibility to fix Lee's forces went to French. On July 19, he received orders to hold Ashbey's Gap with the XII Corps holding Snickersville and Snicker's Gap just to the north. The Fifth and Sixth Corps were ordered to move to positions to support the lead corps.(77) As ordered, French attacked on the morning of July 23d. However, he attacked with only one brigade, in what General Warren late testified before Congress was a "very feeble attack." Warren, in his description, went on to say that French "wasted the whole day; and the enemy got off again that night....I am sure General Meade was more disappointed in that result than in anything else that had happened."(78) The one brigade attack was not run until very late in the afternoon and was called off because of darkness. The Confederates escaped under cover of darkness.

In his final report dated October 1, 1863, Meade excused the whole episode in two lines.

The possession of the [Manassas] gap was dis-

puted so successfully as to enable the rear-guard to withdraw by way of Strasburg, the Confederate army retiring to the Rapidan. A position was taken with the army on the line of the Rappahannock, and the campaign terminated about the close of July.(79)

The reason Meade's plan to attack Lee at Manassas Gap goes far beyond a "successful dispute of the gap by Lee's rear guard," was on July 22, French was ordered to "if practicable, attack the enemy now moving through Front Royal and Chester Gap." (80) By the time the slow moving French took Manassas Gap in his approach to Front Royal, Longstreet's Corps had already passed via Chester Gap enroute to Culpepper. However, all was not lost because, Ewell's Corps had yet to pass and would not reach Front Royal until the next day.(81) It was the perfect opportunity to defeat Lee piecemeal. French would not attack as ordered, but would "hold two divisions at Piedmont, and send forward a third to re-enforce Brigadier General Buford, who had been directed to seize the Gap." (82) On the 23d, French would not commit his corps to attack until 5 p. m. in the afternoon, when he made a "feeble move" and ordered General Prince to send a "brigade" to drive away the "skirmishers" deployed in the vicinity of Front Royal at Wapping Heights. General Prince sent forward the Excelsior Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Spinola, who was wounded twice during the exchange. The hill was taken and held, and the brigade commander reported that "nothing of interest transpired during the night." The next day found the enemy gone and Prince's report indicated the degree to which the strategy of Meade's order to attack the enemy had been diluted and misinterpreted.

Having demonstrated that there was no important force of enemy in that quarter, I immediately began my return march. At dark, after an arduous day's march and some handsome soldier-ship, my command bivouacked near Markham

Station, in Manassas Gap.

French should have attacked Lee's forces to fix Ewell's Corps and deny them the use of Manassas and Chester Gaps until Meade joined with the rest of the Army. By not attacking, he permitted Lee, instead of retreating via Strasburg; to escape by moving forward under cover of darkness, consolidate his forces near Culpepper, and continue to move towards the Rappahannock. As best can be determined, Meade spent July 23d and 24th a short distance away at his headquarters at Piedmont. If it was his intent to attack Lee at Front Royal, he should have moved to be near French's headquarters where he could have forced the battle in accordance with his plan. Meade as well as French must share the blame for allowing Lee to get his forces through the gaps and consolidated at Culpepper to fight again another day. As Meade stated in his report, "the campaign terminated about the end of July." (84)

#### CENTREVILLE MOVEMENT

On July 31st, Meade ordered his army to take up defensive positions along the Rappahannock. (85) He established his headquarters at Germantown and ordered his cavalry to picket the flanks of the infantry and conduct cavalry operations to provide information on the enemy he now assumed to be deployed in the vicinity of Culpepper and along the south bank of the Rappahannock. He reported the strength of his army as 86,068 men and officers present for duty. (86) He did not issue another order to move his corps against the enemy until September 15, 1863 when, after several terse letters from both Lincoln and Halleck, he advanced his army

towards Culpepper.(87) At the time he issued the movement order, he had not formulated a concept of operations or communicated his intent for the upcoming operations to his commanders. It seems that he simply moved his army forward into the unknown to see what would develop in order to satisfy the administration's desire for action. After six full weeks of repose, he should have been advancing with a well stated objective and a plan to achieve it.

During the six weeks of stagnation, Meade was occupied with several distractions which affected the strength of his army. On August 5, Gordon's Division of about 4000 men was detached and sent to Morris Island, S. C. for other duties.(88) On August 13th Meade was called to Washington to confer with Secretary of War, Stanton. While there he was directed a division of regular troops from the Fifth Corps and the Vermont Brigade of the Sixth Corps to go to New York to quell the draft riots. These were in addition to four brigades sent previously at the end of July. The total number of men and officers Meade was forced to send to New York during August numbered in excess of 9600. His army suffered a serious weakening and Lee was aware of the situation.(89)

As a result of new "meager and conflicting testimony" and the fact that Pleasonton, his cavalry corps commander reported that he had driven "the enemy's cavalry and artillery across the Rapidan," Meade felt compelled to write Halleck and suggested an advance. On September 14, Meade wrote the following to Halleck.

Lee's army has been reduced by Longstreet's corps, and perhaps by some regiments from Ewell and Hill. What the amount of force left with him, it is difficult to conjecture, but I have no doubt it is deemed sufficient by him, with the advantages of position, to check my cross-

ing the Rapidan...I have directed General Pleasanton to maintain his position on the Rapidan... General Warren, with the Second Corps, will remain in position at Culpepper. I should be glad to have your views as to what had better be done....when the detached troops from this army return, I ought to be his superior in numbers, and should be able to require him to fall back....I see no object in advancing, unless it is with ulterior views, and I do not consider this army sufficiently large to follow him to Richmond....I should be glad if you would communicate the views of yourself and the Government at the earliest possible moment.(90)

Halleck responded a day later with weak instructions, "I think preparations should be made to at least threaten Lee, and if possible, cut off a slice of his army."(91) When Lincoln saw Meade's telegram, he wrote to Halleck and said, "My opinion is that he should move upon Lee at once in manner of general attack, leaving to developments whether he will make it a real attack.(92) Halleck modified his weak advice and forwarded Lincoln's letter to Meade on the next day, September 15th. Meade now had clear guidance that "requiring Lee to fall back" was not what the President had in mind. Armed with this guidance, Meade responded later on that day that "I have no doubts Longstreet's corps is gone...I am satisfied Lee has still Ewell and Hill with him; not less than 40,000 or 45,000 infantry and over 5,000 cavalry....I do not much expect any greater success than requiring him to fall still farther back."(93) This was hardly the assessment of a confident army commander.

Meade was more reticent than ever, and on September 18th, wrote once more to seek some sort of reinforcement prior to ordering his army to advance.

General: I have reached such a position that that I do not feel justified in making a farther advance without some more positive authority than was contained in your last letter inclosing one from the President. If I apprehend

rightly the views of the President and yourself, it was to the effect that I might advance on Lee and threaten him with an attack,...my feint might be converted into a real attack, if the development of the movement and subsequent information justified the same. It is precisely this question which now embarrasses me, and which I desire to be advised upon....In this view I am reluctant to run the risks involved, without the positive sanction of the Government.(94)

This series of exchanges had to be exasperating to Lincoln and Halleck. On September 19th, Lincoln responded a final time with a letter that literally told Meade that "Lee's army is the objective point." (95) In this same letter, Lincoln sent a veiled threat. He asked if Lee could defend against Meade's 90,000 effectives with 40,000 men, "why, by the same rule may not 40,000 of ours keep their 60,000 away from Washington, leaving us 50,000 to put to some other use?" (96) Meade moved his army to the Rapidan to threaten Lee and, true to his word, Lincoln transferred the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps to the west to reinforce Rosecrans' beleaguered forces as they faced the onslaught of Longstreet and Bragg.

On the afternoon of October 7th, a Union signal officer intercepted a message from General Stuart to General Fitzhugh Lee which indicated a movement of some type on Meade's right flank. (97) So would start the flank march on Centreville known as the Centreville Movement. Lee perceived Meade to be weak and vulnerable to a flanking movement. He planned to march by "circuitous and concealed roads" leaving the route to Richmond uncovered, and place his army astride Meade's line of communications with Washington and bring him to battle. It was a bold plan which Lee referred to as "swapping queens" because Meade could conceivably make a dash for Richmond leaving Washington to fend for itself. (98) When Meade

discovered the flanking movement, his cautious nature served him well and he reacted in a manner that countered Lee's initiative.

Meade testified before Congress that he felt the initial movement around his right flank was simply to cover his withdrawal from the Rapidan. Meade stated that he ordered his army to cross the Rapidan to give battle to Lee only to discover that Lee had not withdrawn and had marched around his flank. On October 9th, Meade ordered the First and Sixth Corps to cross the Rapidan River to pursue Lee in the event that he was withdrawing.(99) On the 10th, Meade was now convinced that Lee was flanking him on his right and ordered the same corps back to Culpepper Court House. From this time until Meade ordered his army to take up positions in the vicinity of Centreville, he had the advantage of interior lines and advanced ahead of Lee to Centreville in time to take up defensive positions before Lee could get between him and the capital.

The armies clashed briefly at Bristoe Station, where A. P. Hill's corps intercepted the tailend of Meade's rearguard. Meade was occupied with retreating and could not have effected the battle at Bristoe Station. However, if he had communicated to his corps commanders his intent to bring Lee to battle, then perhaps, Sykes would have reversed his line of march at Bristoe Station and formed a line of battle with Warren's corps to fix Hill's corps and gave Meade a chance to turn his forces around to bring Lee to battle. As it happened, late in the afternoon on October 14th, the forces converged at Bristoe Station. Hill's corps reached the station just as the rear of Sykes' Fifth Corps moved out of the area and the lead of Warren's Second Corps moved into the area. Hill deployed his force to attack just as Warren arrived at the scene of the battle. Warren

immediately ordered his divisions to deploy along the railroad cut which they did, and, from protected positions, poured devastating fire on the flanks of the attacking formations inflicting heavy casualties and driving back the enemy. By 9 p. m. Warren had withdrawn his corps from the field and ordered them to continue the march to Centreville to take up their positions.(100)

The reports from Meade to Halleck were interpreted as a retreat by the Army of the Potomac. On October 10th, Meade wrote Halleck that "the enemy have succeeded with their cavalry in forcing back my cavalry."(101) On October 12th, Meade reported "This army was yesterday withdrawn to the north side of the Rappahannock....The intentions of the enemy are as yet undeveloped."(102) On the 13th, Meade, again reported "...I shall occupy tonight a line from Greenwich to Bristoe Station, and continue my retrograde movement, if possible, till I get to the plains of Manassas or across Bull Run."(103) Given the record of the Union army at Manassas and Bull Run, this last message can not be considered a confidence builder. On October, 15th, Meade, once again wrote "Generals Warren and Sykes were successfully withdrawn last night, and the army is now at Union Mills, Centreville, Chantilly, and Fairfax Court House, awaiting the movement of the enemy."(105) This message must have exasperated Lincoln greatly, because he responded with a plea for Meade to attack Lee and promised:

I General Meade can now attack him on a field no more than equal for us, and will do so with all the skill and courage which he, his officers, and men possess, the honor will be his if he succeeds, and the blame may be mine if he fails.(105)

Lee was forced to withdraw as he was out of supplies and the area

around Manassas was barren of forage and supplies. Lee destroyed the railroad line from Bristoe Station to Catlett's Station as he withdrew and prevented Meade from making an aggressive pursuit. Meade reported this to Halleck on the 20th, and remarked "I am afraid that it will take to repair the road and the difficulty of advance without the railroad, will preclude my preventing the sending of troops to the southwest by the enemy." With this setback, Meade was convinced "that the campaign is virtually over for the present season, and that it would be better to withdraw the army to some position in front of Washington." (106) Lee had escaped again.

While there is little that Meade can be blamed for in the Centreville Movement, none of his orders to his commanders gave his intent as being anything more than retreating along his lines of communication. Meade stated that he intended to attack. However, there is little in the records that support his intention during this campaign.

#### RAPPAHANNOCK BRIDGE AND KELLY'S FORD

Meade envisioned the campaign season to be at an end. He suggested as much to Halleck. Lincoln intervened and ordered the Army of the Potomac to attack. The stage was set for the last episodes of 1863. In the remaining months, Meade changed his method of command and very nearly ended the year by bringing his nemesis to battle and, quite possibly, to defeat.

Lincoln put the army in motion with his message of October 24th in which he directed Halleck to tell Meade to attack Lee. The message was unambiguous and succinctly stated.

Taking all our information together, I think it probable that Ewell's corps has started for East Tennessee...Upon this probability, what is to be done? If you have a plan matured, I have nothing to say. If you have not, then I suggest that with all possible expedition, the Army of the Potomac get ready to attack Lee, and that in the meantime a raid shall, at all hazards, break the railroad at or near Lynchburg.(107)

Meade responded by disputing some of the President's information but stated, "I shall make every preparation with the utmost expedition to advance, and in the meantime select a cavalry command, and arrange the details for the raid ordered."(108) This represented quite a departure in tone and enthusiasm from previous correspondence with Halleck concerning orders for the army. The expeditious start was stalled for a short time while the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which Lee had destroyed as he withdrew after Centreville, was repaired. The preparation for the Lynchburg raid was hampered for a lack of horses "suitable for hard cavalry service." It seems that many of the horses were suffering from "rotton hoof" and the raiding force would have to be selected from the best mounted men.(109) Additional information showed the enemy reinforcing the fords across the Rappahannock and constructing huts, indicating that Lee intended to go to winter quarters between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan Rivers with headquarters in the vicinity of Culpepper.(110) While the cavalry dealt with its problems, Meade continued to position his forces for the coming operation.

As Meade completed his preparations for the ordered attack, he requested a change of base and sent a new proposal to Halleck for approval. In a lengthy message dated November 2d, Meade, proposed to cross the Rappahannock on Lee's right flank and take a defensive

position on the Fredericksburg Heights.(111) This proposal sounded like the Meade of old, in that no provisions were made for the directed attack and the plan was, wisely, disapproved by Lincoln.(112)

With his request denied, Meade issued orders for an offensive to begin on November 7th which unlike previously issued orders, were detailed and made concise assignments to include the consolidation of his corps into two more manageable columns. This indicated Meade was also thinking ahead as to how he would attack Lee once he had forced the Rappahannock. He placed French in charge of the left column, which consisted of the First, Second and Third Corps.(113) French immediately placed General Birney in temporary command of Third Corps. The right column was given to Sedgwick and consisted of the Fifth and Sixth Corps.(114) Both of the orders contained phrases heretofore not present in Meade's written orders. "You will attack him vigorously, throwing your whole force upon him, should it be necessary, and drive him from his position, and secure your own upon the high ground," he instructed French. He told Sedgwick, "The duty devolving upon you is to drive the enemy from his positions there on this and the other side of the river, and move toward Brandy Station."

Armed with orders to attack, the forces went forward and captured the fords, but not without some command and control problems which Meade should have seen as an indication of problems to come. The incompetence French displayed at Manassas Gap some months earlier became apparent once again. This was the lost opportunity described by Warren in his testimony to congress. French's force crossed handily on the 7th and on the 8th the enemy surprised by the attack

withdrew in scatted formations. Birney's corps came upon a strong force and formed to attack. Birney informed French that he would advance and attack. In testimony before Congress, Birney stated that Meade ordered him not to advance.(115) French reported "that Prince would have attacked but was afraid to bring on a general engagement."(116) General Prince stated "that he desired to attack, and asked authority for it, but was refused."(117) Meade should have recalled French and Prince's performance at Manassas Gap and taken steps to insure that his orders to attack were obeyed. Certainly Meade should have considered himself warned for the next battle.

#### MINE RUN

The series of events that ended at Mine Run started in October when the Army of the Potomac moved back to the Rappahannock after the series of maneuvers known as the Centreville Movement. The lost opportunity at the fords was not costly to the Army of the Potomac, so Meade planned for one more relatively bold stroke. The weather was a factor and Meade knew that time was important. The army consolidated it's position in the vicinity of Brandy Station and on November 10th, Meade received a "well done" from Lincoln for the actions at the fords. On November 13, Meade requested permission to visit Washington to confer with Halleck and Stanton. The permission was granted and upon his return from Washington, Meade ordered his commanders to prepare to move on short notice.

On November 20, again, Meade uncharacteristically informed his commanders of his intentions to flank Lee and give battle.(118) Meade met with his corps commanders on the 23rd and issued the

movement order to start the battle of Mine Run. On the 26th Meade ordered the movement executed. The forces began their simultaneous movements designed to flank Lee's army. From the instant the army moved, French's corps was delayed and was the source of delays for the other corps.

Meade planned to take his force well to the east and cross the Rapidan, march to a point well south of Lee's positions and attack and turn his flank. The plan called for the forces to move "by woods-roads, the existence and character of which had been ascertained, by careful inquiry, with sufficient accuracy to be used in such an operation, though not with the detail of an actual reconnoissance." (119) The lack of a route reconnoissance doomed the plan. Meade sent a guide to French's corps, a Mr. McGee, who professed "to know the road from Jacob's Ford to Robertson's Tavern." (120) This helped little as French became lost, causing a delay in the consolidation of the forces at Robertson's Tavern, which allowed the enemy time to react to the movement of the forces. The exasperating delays caused the potentially successful plan to become well known to the enemy, therefore, Lee was able to counter it successfully.

The reinforcing errors that occurred at precisely the wrong time caused a delay of another day. General Prince and General French marched on the wrong route and the Third Corps spent the better part of November 27th involved in the battle of Payne's Farm which caused a disastrous delay in the scheduled movement to consolidate at Robertson's Tavern (Locust Grove). French and Meade communicated constantly the day of the 27th, but, because French was lost, his communications misrepresented his situation which created further

confusion. Finally, after he suffered a total loss of 952 men, French moved into position on the 28th after he, with the able assistance of Prince, had insured that any element of surprise was lost. The fact that the battle at Payne's took place resulted from Meade's order of November 27th, which was based on the distance French had to travel and his previous messages. Meade believed that French was close to Warren and ordered him to attack the enemy to his front and join with Warren at Robertson's Tavern.(120) The damage was done and on the 28th Meade attempted to sort it out.

On the 28th Meade advanced his forces to Mine Run only to find the enemy had reentrenched in a strong position reinforced with earthworks and abatis. That evening, Warren volunteered to march against Lee's right flank to find a more favorable position to assault. On the 29th, Meade instructed his corps commanders to "report from time to time the condition of affairs in their front, and whether any changes have taken place in the disposition of the enemy."(121) During the day, Brigadier General Crawford, one of Sykes' commanders reported "if the corps attacks over the open space, directly in its front...the line will be so exposed over the whole space as to offer but a very slight chance of success."(122) The other corps commanders reported that prospects of an attack to their fronts did not look favorable except Warren, who stated that he had passed the head of Mine Run on the plank and Catharpin roads, and that the conditions there were favorable to an attack.(123) That night, Meade ordered French to send two divisions to Warren and directed that "You will open your batteries tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock punctually."(124) Likewise, instructions were sent to the other commanders to begin the attack at 8 a. m. on November 30th.

Meade ordered the army to attack at three points: Warren would be the main attack on the left, Fifth and Sixth Corps would attack on the right, and the Third and First Corps would attack the center. Meade dispensed with the attack in the center after French complained that his force was too weak as two divisions were detached to Warren.(125)

The artillery opened fire as planned at 8 a. m. on the 30th. The corps commanders prepared to advance on the right flank. General Warren suspended his attack and informed Meade as follows:

It is now 7.45 and I have heard no firing from you, from which I fear the enemy has left your front. His position and strength seem so formidable in my present front that I advise against making the attack here. The full light of the sun shows me that I cannot succeed.(126)

Captain Roebling, of General Warren's staff delivered this dispatch, just ten minutes prior to the opening of the infantry assault. The attack of General Sedgwick was at once suspended.(127) Meade acknowledged the movement had been a failure and withdrew on the night of December 1st without the knowledge of the enemy. The army went into winter quarters north of the Rappahannock.

What could Meade have done to have changed the outcome at Mine Run? If he had relied on his engineering experience, for which he was breveted, during the Mexican War, he might have avoided some of the chaos that resulted from no route reconnaissances, a shortage of pontoons, and a poor choice of crossing sites for the artillery. French performed poorly for him once before, at Manassas Gap. The simple act of putting Sedgwick in the lead to cross at Jacob's Ford could have avoided the delays which resulted from French's incompetence and Prince's blunders.

## CHAPTER SIX

On June 28th, General Meade was informed by Colonel James A. Hardie of General Halleck's staff, that he had been appointed to relieve General Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Meade related the episode a day later in a letter to Mrs. Meade.

Yesterday morning at 3 a. m., I was aroused from my sleep by an officer from Washington entering my tent, and after waking me up, saying he had come to give me trouble. At first I thought that it was either to relieve or arrest me, and promptly replied to him that my conscience was clear, void of offense towards any man; I was prepared for bad news.(128)

With that bit of pessimism expressed, he continued "as, dearest, you know how reluctant we both have been to see me placed in this position, and as it appears to be God's will for some good purpose-- at any rate, as a soldier, I had nothing to do but accept and exert my utmost abilities to command success."(129) These were not the comments of an enthusiastic commander embarked upon a campaign to crush his enemy. Later that day, he wrote a second letter home and declared "I am going straight at them, and will settle this thing one way or the other. The men are in good spirits; we have been reinforced so as to have equal numbers with the enemy, and with God's blessing I hope to be successful." Mostly, Meade's attitude continued to reflect a lack of enthusiasm for command and aggressive action. In a letter to Mrs. Meade dated December 2d, after the failed Mine Run campaign, he wrote "I would rather be ignominiously dismissed, and suffer anything, than knowingly and willfully have thousands of brave men slaughtered for nothing."(130) Grant would

not have been concerned with casualties. He would have been concerned only with having failed to win and inflict damage on the enemy. The cost in casualties seemed to be insignificant to him as long as victory was achieved.

Meade's orders to command the Army of the Potomac stated that he would "not be hampered by any minute instructions" from higher headquarters and that "Your army is free to act as you may deem proper under the circumstances as they arise. You will, however, keep in view the important fact that the Army of the Potomac is the covering army of Washington, as well as the operation against the rebels." Meade acted in a way that indicated he interpreted his most important task to be the protection of Washington.

Grant would not have read past "Your army is free to act as you may deem proper." While Meade maneuvered to "drive the enemy from our soil," Grant would have fought to destroy the enemy army. Soon after Grant assumed command of the Union armies he told Meade what he expected from him, "I want it distinctly understood beforehand that after we cross the river [Rapidan] there is to be no maneuvering with this army for position." Meade was disturbed by the lack of maneuvering and resulting heavy casualties during Grant's first campaign in Virginia and the battle of Second Cold Harbor.(131) During his campaign against Lee in the summer of 1863, Meade maneuvered constantly to keep between Lee and the capital, but never defeated Lee after Gettysburg.

During his pursuit of Lee, Meade failed to tell his commanders how he wanted to defeat the enemy. His movement orders were detailed, but never included actions to be taken upon closing with the enemy. Uncharacteristically, for his last advance across the

Rappahannock, Meade ordered the commanders of his corps to "attack vigorously, throwing your whole force upon him...and drive him from his position." This was one of the few times he told his commanders exactly what he expected them to do upon meeting the enemy. As a result, in the battle for Rappahannock Bridge and Kelly's Ford, they succeeded.

Meade failed to grasp that he should be focused on Lees's army. This prompted a letter from Lincoln which plainly stated that Meade should "make Lee's army, and not Richmond, its objective point." By the time Lincoln wrote this, Meade had twice allowed Lee's army to escape unscathed. Grant immediately understood that Lee was the objective and ordered Meade to follow Lee wherever he goes. That principle escaped Meade unless it was reinforced by his seniors.

Meade lacked the vision to defeat Lee. Lee constantly took the initiative while Meade reacted. Lee had what Clausewitz called "coup d'oeil" defined as "an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead."(132) Lee demonstrated this during the Centreville Movement when he flanked Meade to get astride of Meade's lines of communication and forced him to fight his way back to Washington. A courageous Meade would have massed his forces and attacked Lee on his flank rather than be satisfied to force Lee to retreat. Meade failed to grasp the initiative to bring Lee to battle and allowed a defeated army to maneuver at will.

Each of Meade's commanders had his strengths and weaknesses, however Meade failed to use his commanders properly. Meade consolidated his corps under a strong commander at Gettysburg when he

placed three corps under the command of Major General John F. Reynolds, but did not do so again until he divided his forces into two wings and forced the crossing of Rappahannock Bridge and Kelly's Ford. He placed French in command of one wing and Sedgwick in command of the other. French had performed poorly at Manassas Gap and was a poor choice to command a wing. The crossings were successful in spite of a mediocre performance by French. Again, at Mine Run, he assigned French to lead the advance and suffered as the result of French's incompetence. Meade failed to rely on his best commanders for the critical operations. If he would have placed Sedgwick, one of the best generals in the army, in the lead he could have been spared the delays caused by French's incompetence. Meade would continue to be plagued by control problems until Grant reorganized the Army of the Potomac and reduced the number of corps to four and placed his best generals in command.

Grant dealt with Meade quite effectively by giving him specific instructions and stated his intentions up front. He located his headquarters close to Meade. Although, there is no written account by Grant or others concerning his dissatisfaction with Meade as his reason doing so, Grant clearly commanded the Army of the Potomac from April of 1864 to the end of the war. At one point Grant asked Rufus Ingalls to take command of the Army of the Potomac. Ingalls replied, "Where are you going to be General Grant?" Grant replied, "Right here with the Army of the Potomac." Ingalls responded, "In that case you couldn't have a better man than Meade. You and I, General Grant, are working for the same cause, not for personal aggrandizement. General Meade, under your personal supervision, will do all or more than I could do, while I have no subordinate who would fill my

place."(133) Being well supervised and given concise orders seemed to suit Meade and he performed well for the remainder of the war.

Meade certainly was not a coward. He was wounded at the battle of Glendale, temporarily commanded the First Corps in the battle of Antietam and did admirably. As commander of the Fifth Corps, he took part in the bloody battles of Chancellorsville. It was his performance at Chancellorsville that drew attention to him as a possible candidate for command of the Army of the Potomac upon Hooker's resignation. He emerged as the "hero" of Gettysburg with few equals after only a week in command of the army. Certainly not the record of a coward, yet he seemed to lack the courage and determination to launch his army directly at Lee's army.

In April of 1864, Grant established his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac as the Wilderness Campaign against Lee's army was about to open. With that act Meade, passed into semi-obscurity.

\* \* \* \*

I find the study of military history to be extremely valuable. The mistakes Meade made are just as likely to be repeated by the commanders of today. The press and the politically powerful are as influential and exasperating as ever. While the weapons of warfare have changed considerably from the days of Meade, the distractions and considerations remain the same. In fact, the parallels are startling in their similarities.

Today, as then, no commander can control seven infantry corps, a cavalry corps, a separate artillery and engineer command, and a staff and effectively fight a campaign. I believe Meade's downfall was his

inability to reduce the number of his corps and to place his best officers in command of his major maneuver units to insure his orders were implemented.

In our leadership studies, we have seen the importance of communicating your visions, objectives, and concept of operations to your junior commanders. I can draw from Meade's predicament, the importance of properly communicating your intent and concepts. It is mandatory if you expect them to command their units to attain your objectives. Meade did not do this, but the next time I am in command, I will not make the same mistake.

I feel the most important lesson to be learned from this particular study is the importance of the commander's position on the battlefield. Meade located himself where he could influence the battle at Gettysburg. After that, He failed to place himself at the critical point where he could personally influence the movement of key elements of his army and shift forces to influence the outcome of the battle.

Today, I see an increasing trend towards "battlefield management" and commanders in the rear waiting for "real time" electronic reports of the battle. If I succumb to this type of operational command technique, I believe the that I can hope for are results equal to those of Meade in his pursuit of Lee.

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100. O. R., Vol. 29, Part 1, pp. 242-243.
101. O. R., Vol. 29, Part 2, p. 279.

102. Ibid., p.293.
103. Ibid., p. 305.
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